EXCISE

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 50235 01 OF 03 020226Z
ACTION EA-12
INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 INR-10 EUR-12 SS-10 H-01 NSC-05
NSAE-00 HA-06 L-03 PM-09 PA-01 OES-09 ACDA-12
ICAE-00 SP-02 SPRS-02 /095 W
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P 060221Z NOV 81
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4456
INFO CIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
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DIA FOR DC-4B
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EO 12065: NA
TAGS: SHUM, MOPS, SREF, PINT, PORG, LA, VM, UR
SUBJ: LAO [redacted] CLAIMS SEPTEMBER
"GAS" ATTACK INVOLVED SOVIETS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY TH DATE 9/7/82
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TS AUTH. REASON(S) 1.3(g)(5)+(9)
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B1A9

1. THIS MESSAGE CONVEYS A REPORT FROM A LAO [redacted] WHO CLAIMS THAT HIS AND OTHER RESISTANCE UNITS WERE HIT BY "POISON GAS" ATTACKS IN LAOS DURING SEPTEMBER. WE HAVE NO OTHER INFORMATION TO CONFIRM OR REFUTE HIS STORY, REPORTED HERE AS TOLD TO US. WE WOULD WELCOME WASHINGTON EVALUATION IF ONE CAN BE MADE BASED ON DESCRIPTION OF AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS, "GAS" APPEARANCE, VICTIMS' SYMPTOMS, ETC. [redacted]

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2. THE LAO [redacted] TOLD EMBOFF OCTOBER 25 OF A SERIES OF LETHAL "POISON GAS" ATTACKS ON HIS POSITION AND NEARBY UNITS IN KHAMMOUAN PROVINCE, SEPTEMBER 17, 19 AND 20. AN UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT ALLEGEDLY DELIVERED THE "GAS." GROUND ATTACK FOLLOWED IN WHICH HAND HELD WEAPONS FIRED "POISON GAS" ROUNDS. SOURCE'S DESCRIPTION FOLLOWS IN DETAIL.

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3. SETTING FOR THE ATTACK: [redacted] IN EASTERN KHAMMOUAN PROVINCE NEAR PHAN SANG (VIC WE1690). NEARBY WAS ANOTHER LAO RE-

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SISTANCE UNIT AND A GROUP OF HMONG INSURGENTS. FAMILIES ACCOMPANIED ALL UNITS AND LIVED IN "RESISTANCE VILLAGES." ON SEPTEMBER 12, VIETNAMESE FORCES BEGAN AN ATTACK ON SOURCE'S POSITION IN RETALIATION FOR A SOURCE'S SUCCESSFUL RAID ON A VIETNAMESE POSITION. THE ATTACKING VIETNAMESE UNIT [redacted] WAS UNSUCCESSFUL FOR FIVE DAYS IN REACHING HIS POSITION. ON THE SIXTH DAY, AIRCRAFT HIT HIS POSITION WITH "GAS." B/A9

4. THE AIR ATTACK: ON SEPTEMBER 17, A MIG 21, FLYING AT APPROXIMATELY ONE KILOMETER ALTITUDE APPEARED OVER HIS UNIT'S POSITION AND BEGAN TRAILING LONG CLOUDS OF "WHITE SMOKE" EACH APPROXIMATELY 400 METERS LONG. AFTER ABOUT ONE

HOUR THE MIG HAD INSCRIBED A SEVERAL SQUARE KILOMETER AREA WITH SMOKE. APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES AFTER THE MIG DEPARTED A SECOND, LARGER FIXED-WING CRAFT APPEARED. SOURCE CLAIMED THAT THE PLANE HAD TWO PIPES EXTENDING FROM THE REAR OF THE AIRCRAFT (SIMILAR TO MID-AIR REFUELING PLANES HE CLAIMED, THOUGH THE PIPES APPEARED TO BE RIGID AND ONLY ABOUT AS LONG AS THE CRAFT'S RUDDER.) THE SECOND CRAFT BEGAN CIRCLING WITHIN THE WHITE-SMOKE INSCRIBED AREA (THOUGH SEEMINGLY AT A SLIGHTLY HIGHER ALTITUDE). ONE OF THE TWO PIPES EMITTED CONCENTRATED SMALL CLOUDS OF YELLOW SMOKE WHICH THE OTHER PIPE DISPERSED WITH A BURST OF AIR AUDIBLE ON THE GROUND. THE CIRCLING CRAFT EMITTED IN ALL 50 - 60 SUCH CLOUDS ALL WITHIN THE INSCRIBED AREA. WIND CONDITIONS IN THE AREA WERE LIGHT AND DID NOT DISTURB THE CLOUDS SIGNIFICANTLY.

5. AIR ATTACK EFFECTS: AFTER ABOUT 30 MINUTES FROM THE TIME THE FIRST YELLOW CLOUDS APPEARED, SOURCE AND OTHERS ON THE GROUND IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY FELT PAIN IN THE EYES (AS IF CHILI PEPPER HAD BEEN RUBBED IN THEM). SOURCE NOTED THAT WHILE THE GAS WAS COLORLESS AT GROUND LEVEL, AS IT SETTLED ON LEAVES (WHICH WERE WET) A YELLOW POWDER BECAME VISIBLE. SOURCE SAID THAT OF THE 170 MEN IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA OF THE ATTACK, 34 DIED WITHIN MINUTES. ALL, WHO HAD BEEN CAUGHT IN THE OPEN, BEGAN VOMI ING DARK RED BLOOD (NOT REPEAT NOT PROJECTILE VOMITING). THE VICTIMS LAPSED INTO COMA QUICKLY AND DIED. EIGHTEEN OTHER MEN OF HIS UNIT WHO WITH OTHERS HAD TAKEN

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SHELTER IN CAVES IN THE AREA CAME IN CONTACT
WITH THE YELLOW POWDER AS A RESULT OF THE RAPID
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PAGE 04 BANGKO 50235 01 OF 03 020226Z
DEFOLIATION OF TREES IN THE AREA (IN ALL A
2-5 SQ. KM AREA WAS DEFOLIATED BY THIS ATTACK).
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PAGE 01 BANGKO 50235 02 OF 03 020229Z
ACTION EA-12
INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 INR-10 EUR-12 SS-10 H-01 NSC-05
NSAE-00 HA-06 L-03 PM-09 PA-01 OES-09 ACDA-12
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POWDER COATED LEAVES CONTACT CAUSED INTENSE
ITCHING AND RAPID "ROTTING" OF THE FLESH.
ATTEMPTS TO WASH AWAY THE POWDER SEEMED TO
INTENSIFY THE EFFECT AND SPREAD THE CONTAMINATION.
THE SKIN AND FLESH LOST SENSITIVITY EXCEPT FOR
ITCHING AND BROKE WHEN SCRATCHED. BLOOD FLOWED
FROM THE BREAKS AND WITHIN AN HOUR, CHUNKS OF
FLESH COULD BE PULLED FROM THE BODY. PEOPLE
SERIOUSLY CONTAMINATED DIED QUICKLY. THEIR
CORPSES TURNED BLACK WITHIN A FEW HOURS AND HAIR
COULD EASILY BE REMOVED FROM THEIR HEADS "AS IF
THEY HAD BEEN DEAD FOR A LONG TIME". SOURCE
SAID THAT MANY PEOPLE INHALING SUB-LETHAL DOSES
DEVELOPED BLOODY DIARRHEA (DARK RED) AFTER THE
ATTACK. SOURCE, WHO ONLY INHALED THE "GAS",
VOMITED (NORMAL-NO BLOOD) FOR SEVERAL DAYS,
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 50235 02 OF 03 020229Z
BECAME WEAK, AND LOST HIS VISION FOR ALMOST
ONE DAY. SOURCE COMPLAINED OF CURRENT SYMPTOMS
INCLUDING A LOSS OF SENSITIVITY IN HIS LIMBS,
INABILITY TO DO HEAVY WORK FOR EXTENDED PERIODS
AND A TREMBLING IN HIS HANDS AND ARMS. (EMBOFF
OBSERVED SLIGHT "TREMBLING" THROUGHOUT INTERVIEW.)
[redacted] B/A9
(WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN MEDICAL RECORDS.) IN
ADDITION TO DEATHS IN SOURCE'S UNIT, OVER 500
CIVILIANS AND MILITARY DIED IN THE AREA FOLLOWING
IDENTICAL AIR STRIKES ON NEARBY RESISTANCE UNITS
SEPTEMBER 19 AND 20, WHICH SOURCE OBSERVED (BUT
WAS NOT AFFECTED BY) FROM SEVERAL KILOMETERS

DISTANCE. INFANTS ALLEGEDLY WERE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO THE "GAS" EVEN WHEN NOT IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA OF THE ATTACK.

6. GROUND "GAS" ATTACK: SOURCE CLAIMED THAT FOLLOWING THE AIR "GAS" ATTACK, RESISTANCE TROOPS WERE ATTACKED ON SEPTEMBER 18 BY "SOVIET TROOPS" WHO USED A HAND-HELD WEAPON (SIMILAR TO A B-41) TO FIRE "POISON GAS" ROUNDS INTO SOURCE'S POSITION. RANGE OF THE WEAPON WAS AROUND 200 - 300 METERS AND THE ROUND HAD KILLING RADIUS OF ABOUT 15 METERS. THE ROUND WHEN DETONATED PRODUCED A SMOKE LIKE BURNING LEAVES WHICH CAUSED VICTIMS TO SLIP INTO A COMA AND DIE. DEATH SOMETIMES TOOK AS LONG AS 4 - 5 DAYS. VICTIMS SEEMED TO SWEAT BLOOD WITH TINY DROPS OF RED BLOOD IN PORES. THOSE RECEIVING SUB-LETHAL DOSES LOST SIGHT FOR UP TO SEVERAL DAYS, FELT PAIN IN THE CHEST, AND COUGHED (BRINGING

UP SOME BLOOD). VICTIMS' EYES WERE PAINFUL BUT WERE TREATED WITH SOME SUCCESS WITH A SOLUTION OF WATER AND LEMON GRASS.

7. ALLEGED SOVIET ROLE: SOURCE SAID THAT VILLAGERS SAW FOUR SOVIETS IN PROTECTIVE SUITS WITH MASKS OFF IN AREA OF ATTACK. VILLAGERS (AND SOURCE) ALLEGEDLY ALSO SAW FOUR SOVIET PERSONNEL WEARING PROTECTIVE SUITS AND MASKS ON THE DAY FOLLOWING THE GROUND "GAS" ATTACK APPARENTLY DECONTAMINATING A PORTION OF THAT AREA WHERE THE GROUND ATTACK TOOK PLACE. FOUR SOVIET PERSONNEL, WEARING GREEN SUITS (WHICH APPEARED TO BE PLASTIC) ENTERED THE AREA SPRAYING FROM A CANISTER ATTACHED TO THEIR BACK. A SECOND CANISTER ON EACH INDIVIDUAL'S BACK HAD TUBES WHICH FED FROM THE TANK UNDER THE CARRIER'S COLLAR AND INTO THE NOSE AREA OF MASKS WHICH COMPLETELY ENVELOPED THE WEARER'S FACE. AFTER 15 MINUTES OF SPRAYING SMALL AREAS, LOCAL VILLAGERS WERE TOLD TO GO INTO THE DECONTAIMINATED AREAS AND REMOVE VIETNAMESE WHO HAD BEEN INADVERTENTLY KILLED BY THE GAS ATTACK. THE VILLAGERS SEEMED TO SUFFER NO ILL EFFECT BY ENTERING THESE AREAS AFTER DE-CONTAMINATION.

8. SOURCE ALLEGED THAT THE POISONOUS ROUNDS WERE STORED IN A WAREHOUSE AT A MAJOR VIETNAMESE MILITARY CAMP LOCATED NEAR BAN NONG DONG (VIC UF2128). HE SAID THAT SOVIET PERSONNEL ARE BILLETED AT THIS SITE AS WELL.

9. FOLLOW-UP: SOURCE CLAIMED THAT LEAF SPECIMENS

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CONTAMINATED WITH "YELLOW POWDER" AND A BLOOD
SAMPLE WERE TURNED OVER TO A "WESTERN MALE"
WHEN HE AND SEVERAL OF HIS MEN ENTERED THAILAND
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PAGE 04 BANGKO 50235 02 OF 03 020229Z
LATE-SEPTEMBER-EARLY OCTOBER. WE ARE ATTEMPTING
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PAGE 01 BANGKO 50235 03 OF 03 020227Z
ACTION EA-12
INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 INR-10 EUR-12 SS-10 T-01 NSC-05
NSAE-00 HA-06 L-03 PM-09 PA-01 DES-09 ACDA-12
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TO TRACK DOWN THESE SAMPLES. HE ALSO CLAIMED
TO HAVE BEEN HOSPITALIZED [redacted] B1 A9
[redacted] FOR HEALTH PROBLEMS
RELATED TO THE GAS ATTACK. WE ARE ATTEMPTING
TO OBTAIN COPIES OF HIS HEALTH RECORD [redacted] B1 A9
[redacted]
10. EMBASSY NOTE: DEPENDING ON ITS EVALUATION OF
THE ABOVE REPORT'S CONTENT, DEPARTMENT MAY WISH
TO EXPAND DISTRIBUTION.
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